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www.deq.state.ut.us/eqwq/watershed/shed.htm

WATERSHED PROTECTION APPROACH

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Clean water is Utah's most precious resource. A locally driven water quality program is needed to protect this resource and ensure the prosperity of current and future generations. The Watershed Approach provides the framework for developing and implementing TMDL plans to restore and protect water quality.

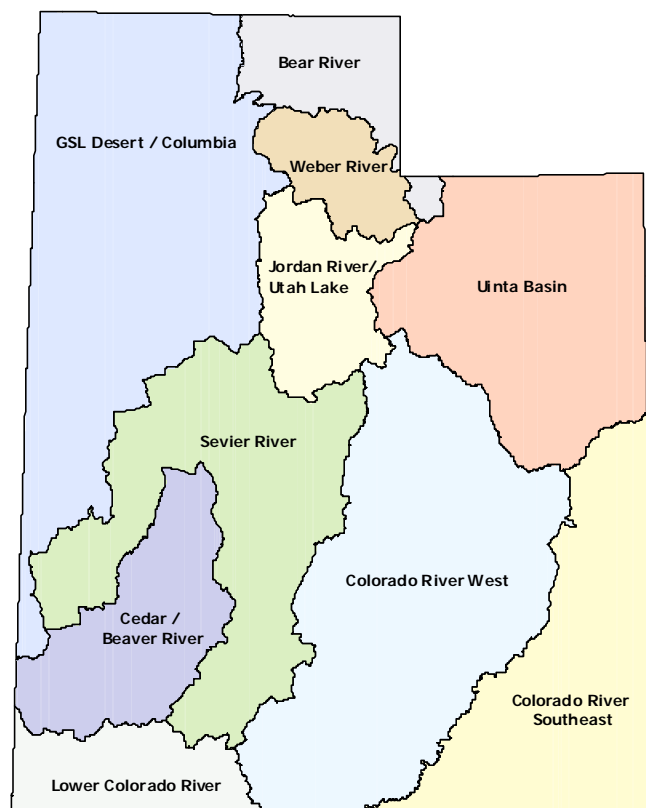
WHAT IT IS

The Watershed Approach is a common-sense program aimed at improving the protection of Utah's surface and ground water resources. It features include a high level of stakeholder involvement, water quality monitoring and information gathering, problem targeting and prioritization, and integrated solutions that make use of multiple agencies, groups and local citizens.

Based on a model successfully used by other states, the program draws on the expertise of those involved in or affected by water quality management decisions. Local stakeholders help gather information and design management plans, then become involved in the execution of these plans.

The Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Water Quality sponsors the program. Federal and state regulations charge the Division with "preventing, controlling, and abating" water pollution. Other state and local agencies have similar responsibilities. The Watershed Approach forms - partnerships with these groups to pool resources, thus increasing the effectiveness of existing water quality programs.

DWQ Watershed Management Units



HOW IT WORKS

Utah's surface waters include 16,457 miles of rivers and streams, nearly 3,000 lakes and reservoirs covering 481,638 acres and approximately 510,039 acres of wetlands and 1,902 linear miles of wetlands. These resources have been divided into ten watershed management units, corresponding to the basins defined by the Division of Water. A watershed is the entire area drained by a stream and its tributary branches.

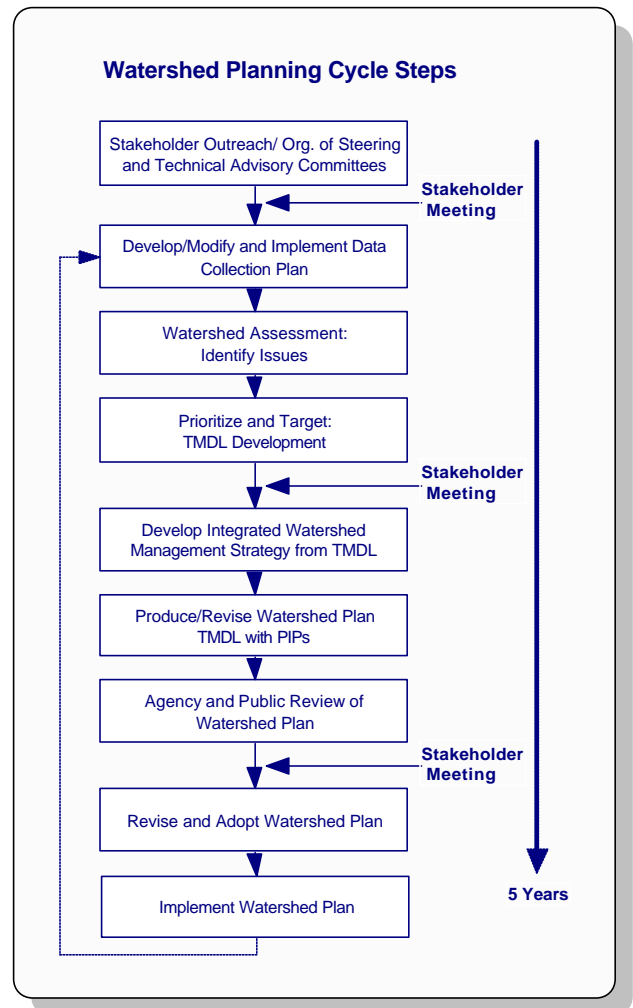
Management plans are developed in targeted watersheds with impaired waters. Intensive monitoring to support this process is rotated among the 10 river basins on a 5-year cycle.

Each watershed planning process is directed by a locally led and sponsored Steering Committee. Members are usually policy makers from the local, regional and state levels. The Committee sets the direction while a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) provides staff support. Others who may be interested in the process are invited to participate in information gathering and implementation activities.

INFORMATION GATHERING

Once the direction has been set, participants pool their resources to gather existing data, acquire additional data and identify and carry out special assessments. The focus is on the watershed as a unit. Water quality monitoring plans (chemical, biological or physical) are developed to direct the collection of needed data or to evaluate the success of implementation projects in achieving the endpoints/targets established within an approved TMDL watershed plan.

TMDL DEVELOPMENT



The acronym *TMDL* stands for *Total Maximum Daily Load*. It represents the maximum amount of a pollutant that can be present in a stream, lake or reservoir without impairing beneficial uses. When pollutant levels exceed water quality standards, plans need to be developed identifying the sources of the pollutant and a plan to reduce those sources.

TMDL's are developed through the locally led watershed planning effort where possible. TMDL plans focus on identifying all significant sources of a pollutant, determining pollutant loads from these sources, allocating

the load reduction required to achieve the TMDL level and developing an implementation plan with specific measures identified to reduce allocated loads from those identified pollutant sources. The TMDL process establishes a “reasonable assurance” that the plan will restore water quality to a non-impaired status. All TMDL’s need to be submitted to EPA for approval.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Watershed Approach relies heavily on active, local involvement. Participation by local governments, local - health departments, and citizens ensures that individuals most likely to be knowledgeable of watershed conditions will help identify problems and develop solutions.

All meetings are open for public input into the decision-making process. These meetings aim at achieving consensus between the technical resource managers and resident stakeholders by establishing goals and priorities and directing implementation activities. Effective restoration and protection of water quality requires the participation of all stewards in a watershed.

Strategy development focuses on technical factors, stakeholder issues and implementation. During this process, stakeholders identify specific goals and objectives, then design strategies to achieve them. These strategies are incorporated into the TMDL plans or the watershed plan. Whenever possible, strategies build on existing projects with proven value.



IMPLEMENTATION

The local steering committee considers beneficial use, ecological value, severity of impact to water quality and the degree of risk to human health or wildlife in setting its priorities. Resources are targeted based on potential water quality improvement, cost, potential for success, degree of public support, and a combination of technical and administrative feasibility.



The watershed plan will contain not only practical measures identified to address the identified problems, but a strategy to implement projects based on the severity of impact to existing water quality impairments.

Implementation activities may include:

- modification of permit limits/parameters for permittees under the Utah Pollution Discharge Elimination System (UPDES) Program,

- elimination or treatment of runoff waters from urban, agricultural or other lands,
- development of local planning policies to control a variety of sources of pollutants,
- implementation of best management practices to reduce or control the movement of pollutants into impaired waters,
- restoration of streams and riparian corridors,
- treatment of uplands to stabilize soils, and
- development of educational programs.

An evaluation program is also an integral component in the plan to measure success and guide future plan revisions.

Volunteer programs to support implementation are strongly encouraged. Local nonpoint source projects targeted by a steering committee will be eligible for funding and technical support under Utah's 319 nonpoint source program and other federal programs designed to restore or improve water quality.



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